

Current Trends

There are **7,755 farms** in Massachusetts working on over **523,000 acres** to produce **\$492 million in agricultural products**. The average farm produces \$63,470 of agricultural products on just 68 acres. Massachusetts farms provide employment to nearly **28,000 workers** in the Commonwealth.

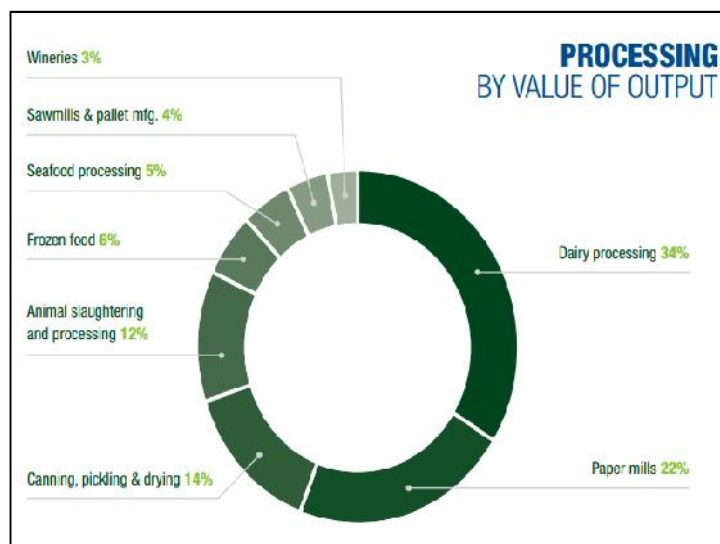
While nationally the U.S. witnessed a decline in agriculture from 2007 to 2012, Massachusetts was one of the few states to experience a **1% growth in both number of farms and acres in farmland**.

Due to its small size, Massachusetts' agriculture industry is ranked **47th** in total commodities, but is a producer of crops specialized to the eastern seaboard.

The average age of a Massachusetts principal operator is **57.8 years old**. Female farmers represent **32%** of all principal operators; a **10% increase** since 2002.

According to a 2012 report by Farm Credit East, **agricultural processing** is estimated to add an additional **\$13 billion** to the total agricultural value.

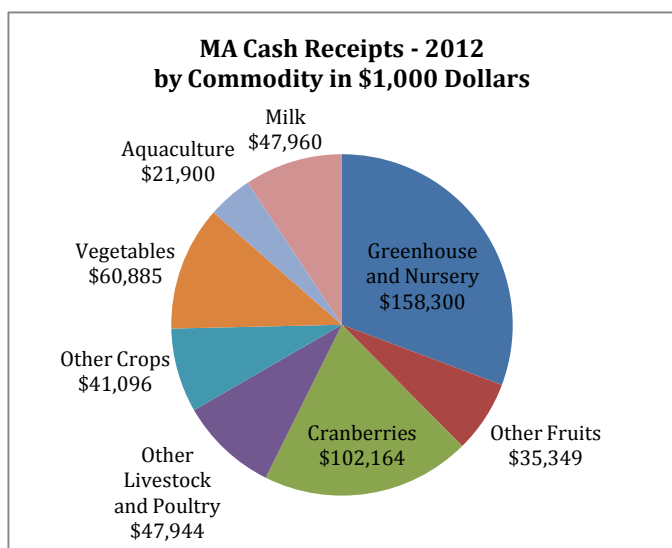
Agricultural land preservation, environmental conservation, energy efficiency and business planning are some of the keys to the future viability of our Massachusetts agricultural enterprises.



Industry Trends for Massachusetts Top Agricultural Products

The **greenhouse and nursery industry** is made up of approximately 1,000 commercial businesses and accounts for approximately 28% of the state's agricultural output at an annual value of \$158 million. Recent years have seen hardship primarily due to *competition and marketplace uncertainty*. Competition has been a result of the expansion of garden centers at "big-name" national home improvement stores, which benefit from economies of scale and competitive pricing, while market uncertainty has been driven by the inherent link to the housing market, now on the rebound from the 2008 housing market downturn.

With an annual market value of \$102 million, making up 20% of the state's agricultural output, the **cranberry industry** is the second largest agricultural sector in the state and ranks 2nd nationally in cranberry production.



There are approximately 400 growers in the state, 70% of which are *small family farms* with less than 20 acres of bogs. Concern continues over *market volatility* as the result of extreme oversupply due to increased domestic and international production, met with stagnant demand, causing prices to often fall far below the cost of production.

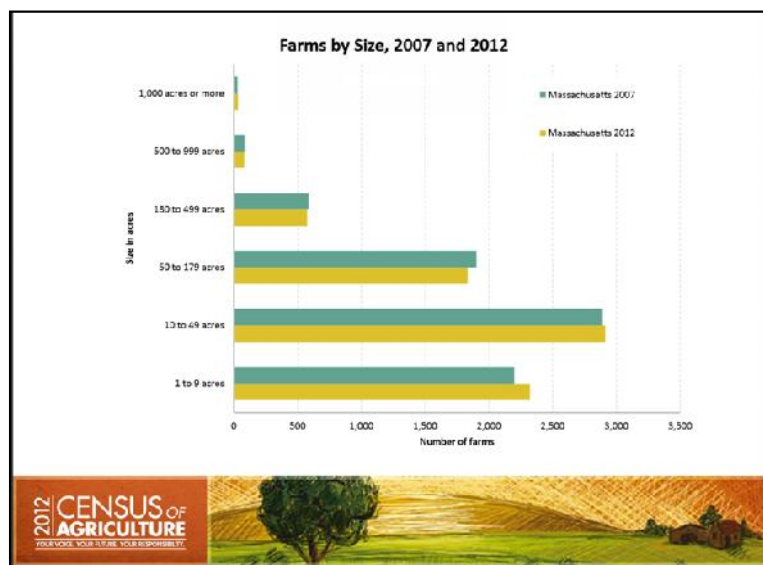
The **produce sector** has an annual market value of \$96 million and nearly 1,600 producers, 40% growing vegetables and 60% growing fruit. Growers are preparing for the requirements and implications of the Food Safety Modernization Act.

The **dairy industry** is a small but critical part of the state's agricultural economy, with a market value of \$48 million. 155 dairy farms remain, the majority of which belong to

cooperatives, 16 of which produce, process, and market their own milk. Difficulty continues over managing *fluctuating federally set milk prices*, paired with the high cost of production characteristic of the state.

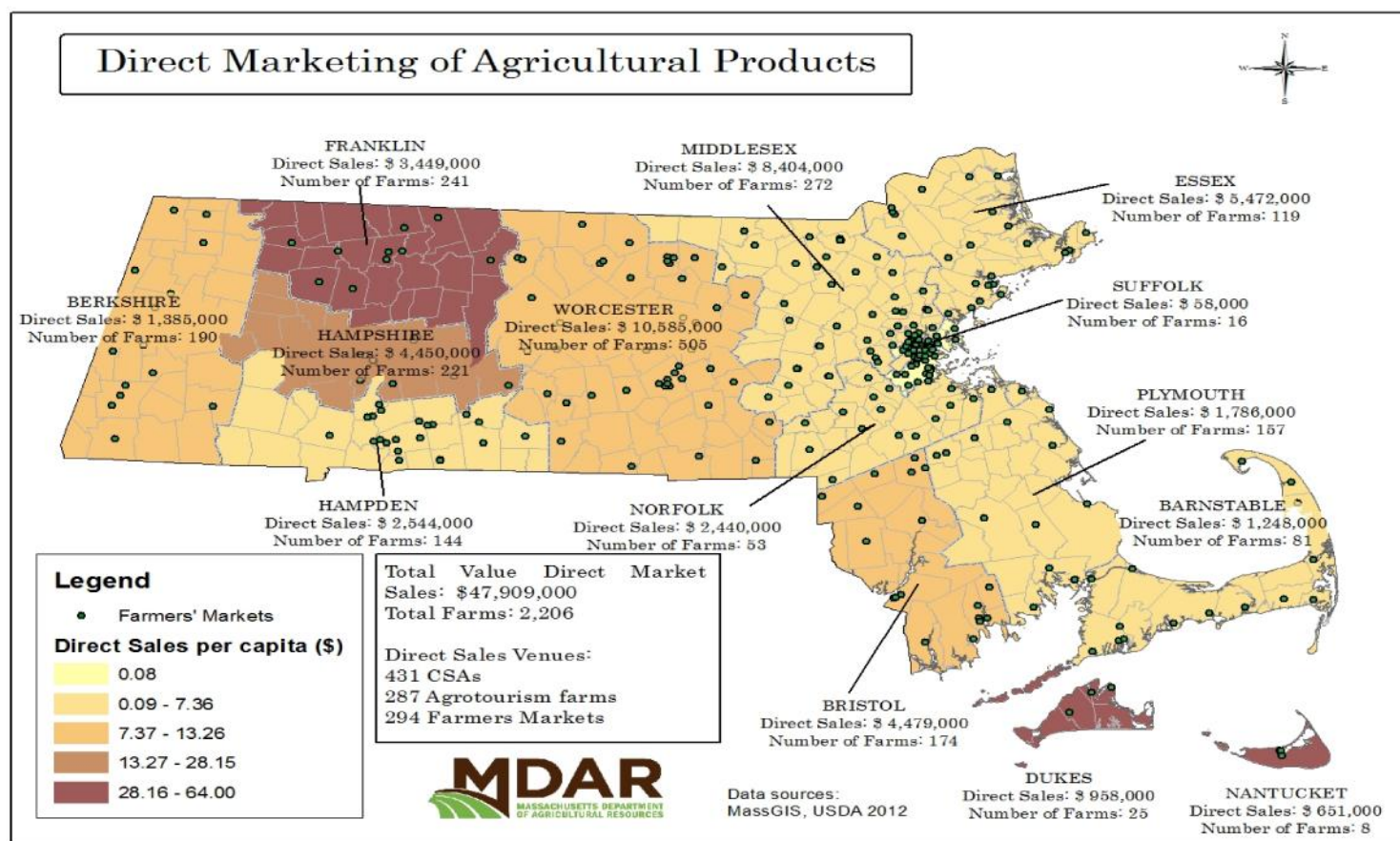
With an annual market value of \$48 million, the **livestock and poultry sector** has seen a *large increase in demand* for local meats and poultry. Growers have access to the Boston market where consumers are willing to pay a premium for local products. However, concern continues over whether the state's producers can meet the increasing momentum and demand for these products due to the *limited number of slaughter and processing facilities*.

The **aquaculture industry** is responsible for an annual market value of nearly \$22 million. With the exception of a few major finfish producers, the majority of the state's aquaculture is comprised of approximately 300 shellfish farmers producing primarily oysters and quahogs on 1,000 acres of intertidal and sub-tidal land. In recent years, harvest areas have faced challenges over managing outbreaks of *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*, a bacteria that can cause gastrointestinal disease, and have adopted practices to help minimize the risk of contamination and illness.



Driving Forces

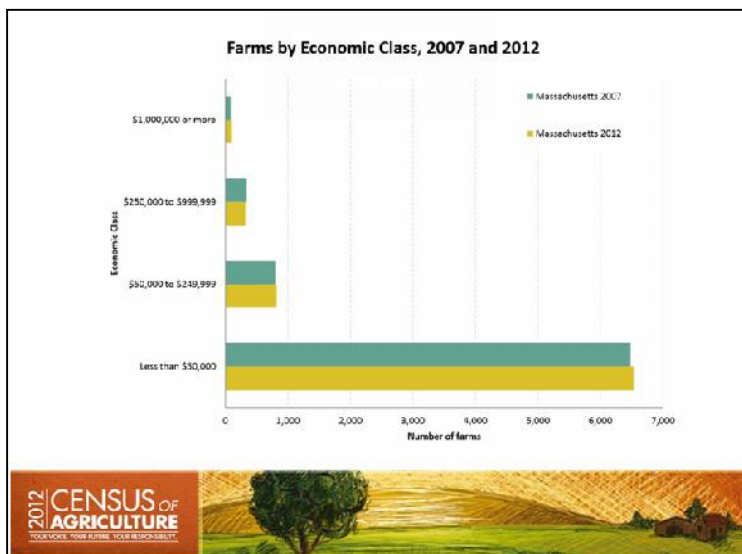
Massachusetts is the **3rd** most densely populated state in the country and among the top three states for farmland value at **\$12,000 per acre**. In addition, factors such as a **short growing season** and **high national competition** make farming in Massachusetts a unique and challenging occupation. As a result, Massachusetts farmers have emerged as agricultural entrepreneurs, with many taking advantage of small scale and **diversified farming** to meet upcoming trends and demands. In 2014, the trend towards increasing numbers of smaller farms continued.



At nearly **\$48 million**, the state ranks **5th** in the nation for direct market sales and **3rd** in the nation for direct market sales per operation. Direct market sales account for **10%** of the state's total sales of agricultural products.

Massachusetts ranks **6th** in the nation for number of farms with Community Supported Agriculture (CSA); a **95% increase** since 2007. Over this same time period the state saw growth in agri-tourism sales of **127%**.

80% of Massachusetts farms are family owned. **95%** fit the category of "small farms" according to the USDA definition of sales below \$250,000.





Helping to keep Massachusetts' food supply safe and secure

Working to keep Massachusetts agriculture economically and environmentally sound

www.mass.gov/agr

The **Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources** (MDAR) mission is to ensure the long-term viability of agriculture in Massachusetts. Through its four divisions – Agricultural Conservation & Technical Assistance, Agricultural Markets, Animal Health, and Crop and Pest Services – MDAR strives to support, regulate and enhance the rich diversity of the Commonwealth's agricultural community, to promote economically and environmentally sound food safety and animal health measures, and fulfill agriculture's role in energy conservation and production.

Key Department Initiatives

Agricultural Energy Grant Program (Ag-Energy) - provides reimbursement of up to \$20,000 and funds projects pertaining to energy efficiency and renewable initiatives.

Agricultural Environmental Enhancement Program (AEEP) - supports agricultural operations looking to install conservation practices that prevent direct impacts on water quality, ensure efficient use of water, and address impacts on air quality. Participants are reimbursed up to \$25,000 for the cost of materials and labor necessary for the installation of the approved practice.

Agricultural Food Safety Improvement Program (AFSIP) – provides funding for agricultural operations looking to upgrade their food safety measures, thereby allowing them to maintain or increase their competitive market access while reducing food safety risks. Participants are reimbursed up to \$20,000 or 75% of the total project costs.

Agricultural Preservation Program (APR) - preserves and protects agricultural land, including state designated prime farmland soils, from being developed into non-agricultural operations. Participants are paid the agricultural value of the land in exchange for a permanent covenant.

Commonwealth Quality Program (CQP) - assists members in improving their farm operations in order to maintain and improve market access. The CQP seal helps consumers, buyers, and business partners identify products produced and harvested in Massachusetts. Members must incorporate food safety practices and Best Management Practices (BMPs) that promote environmental sustainability

and stewardship. Currently, CQP supports the produce, forestry, lobster, aquaculture, dairy, and maple sectors.

Massachusetts Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) - provides elders, women, and children in the Federal Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), with coupons redeemable at farmers' markets. Participation benefits farmers with additional sales opportunities.

Farm Viability Program - improves the economic viability of participating farms through the development and implementation of farm viability plans. Participants receive environmental, technical, and business planning assistance to expand and upgrade their existing operations.

Massachusetts Grown & Fresher – a logo program for consumers to identify and purchase local Massachusetts grown farm products, specialty foods, and agri-tourism as well as culinary tourism activities.

Matching Enterprise Grants for Agriculture Program (MEGA) - offers individual business planning and technical assistance to support the special needs of beginning farmers. Financial assistance is available for capital needed to implement strategies recommended through the planning process.

Urban Agriculture – provides funding to address challenges facing urban farmers and to support municipalities with technical assistance with the development of zoning ordinances, public education, and land assessments.

For more information on all of MDAR's programs, please visit our website

www.mass.gov/agr

Topics discussed here will be covered in greater detail throughout the various presentations of the NAAMO conference.